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Environment Department Offers Tips to Make Summer Swimming Safer

(Santa Fe, NM) — As summer kicks off and belly flops and cannon balls begin the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) would like to remind citizens how to ensure healthy, clean and safe swimming pools.

NMED regulates each of the approximately 1,100, public pools in New Mexico. The department examines pool designs, addresses design flaws and issues permits for new pools. The Department also inspects public pools multiple times a year and issues annual operating permits to ensure that pools are well managed and maintained.

The Department's more than forty-five inspectors are well-trained and experienced professionals who examine every part of a pool's operation from its electrical system to its health and safety precautions including the training of pool staff.

As it does all year round, NMED will continue to ensure public pool safety during the height of the swimming season. But the public can do its part as well. "If you notice something wrong, or if you can't see the bottom of the pool, don't get in--call us," says Steve Walker, NMED's Swimming Pool Program Manager.

Other healthy swimming tips include:

- Make sure pool chlorine and Ph are maintained at optimum levels
- Take kids on bathroom breaks frequently. If you wait for "I have to go," it may be too late
- Practice good hygiene and make sure children shower and wash thoroughly *before* they swim
- Don't swallow pool water

By inspecting pools and offering free pool operation training and consultation, NMED works to make swimming safer. Pools that aren't properly run can become safety and health hazards. If they fail to meet state cleanliness standards, pools can become breeding grounds for communicable diseases and dangerous bacteria such as giardia, cryptosporia, and E. coli.

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Legislation sponsored by Senator Cynthia Nava and recently signed into law by Governor Bill Richardson, will help NMED maintain its vigilance poolside into the future. NMED will begin collecting nominal fees for pool operation permits beginning next year. These fees will not exceed \$150 and will be assessed on a sliding scale. All fees collected will become part of a fund to enhance the pool program and continue the many free services the program currently offers.

For further information contact Jon Goldstein, NMED Communications Director at (505) 827-0314.

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